



DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling

For Your Information...

Illegal Dumping

Illegal dumping is the disposal of waste on property without a permit. Illegal dumping usually happens in open areas and along roadsides and frequently but not always late at night. The waste primarily is non-hazardous material that is dumped to avoid disposal fees or the time and effort required for proper disposal.

Illegal dumping is a serious issue in South Carolina. It is estimated that there are hundreds of sites across the state.

The materials typically dumped include:

- Construction and demolition debris (C&D), including drywall, shingles, lumber, bricks, concrete and siding;
- Abandoned vehicles, parts and tires;
- Furniture;
- Yard waste;
- Household garbage; and
- Medical waste.

Materials such as tires as well as C&D debris may be dumped illegally because they are banned from landfills in South Carolina and proper management costs money. Residential waste and commercial waste also may be dumped because there isn't adequate service or simply to avoid disposal costs.

The common locations used for illegal dumping often include abandoned industrial sites, vacant lots on public or private property and little used roadways or alleyways. Areas along rural roads and railways are particularly vulnerable because of their accessibility and poor lighting.

Illegal dumping also can occur on property with the owner's permission. A property owner may benefit financially by charging a fee to someone who wants to dump material on his property. In addition, a property owner may increase the value of his property



by filling ravines or other areas at the risk of not obtaining permits or of damaging the environment.

If not addressed, illegal dumps often attract more waste, potentially including hazardous waste such as household chemicals, asbestos, automobile fluids and paint.

Who dumps this stuff?

It is difficult to single out a "typical" dumper. But offenders can be construction, demolition, remodeling, roofing and landscaping contractors. Other offenders can be general haulers, junkyard operators, automobile repair shops, scrap collectors, do-it-yourselfers and everyday local residents.

C&D debris is a particular problem and makes up a large percentage of illegal dumps. Some builders and contractors cut their costs by illegally dumping, thus under-bidding those who legally dispose of their C&D at permitted landfills.

Why is illegal dumping a problem?

The human health risks associated with illegal dumps are significant. Illegal dumps may be easily accessible to people, particularly children, who can get hurt from the nails and sharp edges of materials and the hazards posed by chemicals. Illegal dumps also attract all kinds of rodents and insects. For example, illegal dumps with waste tires provide a practically perfect place for mosquitoes to breed. Mosquitoes can multiply 100 times faster than normal in the warm, stagnant water in waste tires. Severe illnesses like encephalitis have been attributed to disease carrying mosquitoes coming from waste tires.

In addition, property has been damaged because of illegal dumps that have caught fire, frequently by arson. Illegal dumping can impact proper drainage of runoff making areas more susceptible to flooding when waste blocks ravines, creeks, culverts and drainage basins. In rural areas, open burning at illegal dumps can cause forest fires and severe erosion as fire destroys trees and undergrowth. Runoff from illegal dumps may contaminate wells and surface water used as sources of drinking water. And as a result of illegal dumping, property values may decrease.

Illegal dumping is just that – it is against the law. The state can prosecute illegal dumpers through the S.C. Litter Control Act and the S.C. Solid Waste Policy and Management Act of 1991.



Anyone convicted of illegal dumping may be fined, ordered to clean up the site and given a jail sentence.

The cost of cleaning up an illegal dump becomes the burden of the private property owner and/or contractor. But if legal actions are not successful in proving the person responsible, the taxpayers will have to pay for the cost of cleanup.

If you know of an illegal dump, please notify local authorities. For more information, please call DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling at **1-800-768-7348**.

DID YOU KNOW? Natural disasters, like flooding, frequently lead to widespread illegal dumping of damaged appliances, furniture and other household materials.



DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling FYIs provide general information on environmental topics. Readers are encouraged to reproduce this material. For more information about solid waste issues, please call **1-800-768-7348** or visit our Web site at www.scdhec.net/recycle. Please send written correspondence to: DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201.